

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----162358Z 069709 /66

O 162227Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5243

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 GUATEMALA 1691

EXDIS

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER ONLY

E.O. 11652 GDS  
TAGS: OGEN, PN, PFOR  
SUBJ: US/PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

REF: STATE 057150

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION AS  
PREPARED BY MR. HERVAS:

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJ: US/PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

DATE: SUNDAY MARCH 13, 1977 TIME: 10:00 AM

PLACE: EMBASSY RESIDENCE, EMBASSY OF PANAMA, WASHINGTON, D.C.

PARTICIPANTS:

UNITED STATES:  
AMBASSADOR BUNKER  
AMBASSADOR LINOWITZ  
A.J. HERVAS, INTERPRETER

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PANAMA:  
ROMULO ESCOBAR  
EDWIN FABREGA  
ARISTIDES ROYO, MIN. OF EDUCATION (NOTETAKER)  
JAIME ARIAS  
MR. JACKSON

ESCOBAR: FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO GREET AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND AMBASSADOR LINOWITZ AND EXPLAIN THE PRESENCE ON OUR DELEGATION OF MINISTER OF EDUCATION DR. ARISTIDES ROYO. THOUGH YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE SEEN HIM AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE IN THE PAST, HE HAS ALWAYS WORKED VERY CLOSELY WITH US WITHIN THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM. NOT ONLY FOR THIS REASON, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION IN OUR GOVERNMENT AS A MEMBER OF THE CABINET, GENERAL TORRIJOS HAS SENT HIM TO THIS MEETING WHICH HE CONSIDERS OF TRANSCENDENTAL IMPORTANCE. I ALSO WANT TO MENTION THAT DR. JAIME ARIAS WILL JOIN US AS SOON AS HE ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON. AT DIFFERENT TIMES DURING THE COURSE OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS, HE HAS PLAYED A VERY ACTIVE ROLE, ESPECIALLY DURING THE DRAFTING OF THE STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT. IN ADDITION TO EXTENDING TO YOU A WARM GREETING, I ALSO WANT TO TELL YOU THAT WE HAVE BROUGHT YOU SOME PRESENTS WHICH WE HAVE PLACED ON THE TABLE. ON THE ONE HAND YOU CAN SEE A TURTLE, AND ON THE OTHER SOME RABBITS. PLEASE RECEIVE THEM AS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR AFFECTION. IN ADDITION, ONE OF OUR PURPOSES IS TO PERCEIVE HOW OUR NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT PROCEED, WHETHER AT THE PACE OF THE TURTLE, OR WITH THE SPEED OF A RABBIT. WHAT YOU PICK UP FIRST, WE WILL TAKE AS A MESSAGE OF YOUR INTENTIONS AND THIS SHOULD SAVE US SOME TIME. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR INVITATION TO MEET WITH US AND YOU CAN SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT WE ARE VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE. IT SHOWS THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PANAMA'S PROBLEMS. GENERAL TORRIJOS HAS

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INSTRUCTED US TO DISCUSS WITH YOU, IN FULL PRIVACY AND WITH COMPLETE CONFIDENCE, ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT COME UP, WITH THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING WHETHER OUR TWO COUNTRIES CAN REALISTICALLY WORK TOWARDS A TREATY THAT RESOLVES THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN US, AS WELL AS PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO CONDUCT RELATIONS WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA.

BUNKER: THANK YOU AMBASSADOR ESCOBAR. BOTH AMBASSADOR LINOWITZ AND I APPRECIATE YOUR COURTESY IN COMING TO WASHINGTON TO MEET WITH US, AFTER YESTERDAY'S ABORTED MISSION. IT IS INDEED A GREAT COURTESY ON YOUR PART. REGARDING THE QUESTION OF THE TURTLE AND THE RABBITS, WE'RE FACED WITH TWO ALTERNATIVES. THE TURTLE'S PACE IS SLOW BUT STEADY. RABBITS ON THE OTHER HAND, BREED VERY FAST. MAYBE IF WE FOLLOWED THEIR EXAMPLE IN BREEDING MORE IDEAS FASTER, THIS COULD LEAD US TO FINDING SOLUTIONS. I LEAVE IT UP TO YOU TO SUGGEST WHAT ALTERNATIVE WE SHOULD FOLLOW.

ESCOBAR: I BELIEVE THAT A MIXTURE OF BOTH ALTERNATIVES  
WOULD BE THE BEST ONE TO FOLLOW.

BUNKER: AMBASSADOR LINOWITZ AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD  
BE USEFUL TO HOLD THIS INFORMAL MEETING TO CONTINUE OUR  
SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS AND  
ISSUES WE FACE, BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE NEXT FORMAL  
ROUND OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS, AND SEE IF WE CAN MAKE  
ANY MORE HEADWAY.

FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO REPORT TO YOU ON OUR ACTIVITIES  
SINCE WE RETURNED FROM OUR LAST MEETING IN CONTADORA.  
WE HAVE REPORTED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, TO THE  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, AND TO THE JOINT CHIEFS. WE  
HAVE ALSO TALKED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND WITH THE  
VICE PRESIDENT. WE HAVE GIVEN THE PRESIDENT THE  
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MESSAGE FROM GENERAL TORRIJOS, AND THE PRESIDENT HAS  
WRITTEN HIM A LETTER IN RESPONSE, OF WHICH I HAVE A  
COPY HERE FOR YOUR INFORMATION, AS I DO NOT KNOW  
WHETHER YOU HAVE SEEN THE TEXT. I UNDERSTAND THE  
LETTER ARRIVED IN PANAMA TWO DAYS AGO AND WAS TRANSMITTED  
TO THE GENERAL.

(AT THE REQUEST OF THE PANAMANIAN DELEGATION THE FULL  
ENGLISH TEXT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER WAS ORALLY  
TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH BY HERVAS)

LINOWITZ: I UNDERSTAND THAT AMBASSADOR JORDEN SPOKE  
TO FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALEZ REVILLA, AFTER THE  
PRESIDENT'S LETTER HAD BEEN TRANSMITTED TO GENERAL  
TORRIJOS. SINCE THEN AMBASSADOR JORDEN HAS CALLED

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EXDIS

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER ONLY

US AND READ THE GENERAL'S RESPONSE. WE DO NOT HAVE IT IN WRITING YET, BUT HE TOLD US THAT THE GENERAL EXPRESSED HIS WARM APPRECIATION FOR THE THOUGHTFUL AND FRIENDLY SENTIMENTS EXPRESSED BY THE PRESIDENT IN HIS LETTER. HE FELT THAT THEY WOULD BECOME GOOD FRIENDS BECAUSE BOTH WERE POPULISTS, AND BOTH SHARE THE SAME ASPIRATIONS FOR THE WELL BEING OF THEIR PEOPLE. WE FEEL IT WAS A WARM AND GRATIFYING RESPONSE.

BUNKER: AMBASSADOR JORDEN ALSO REPORTED THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS HAD SAID THAT APPARENTLY THE NEGOTIATORS EXPECTED THAT BOTH HE AND THE PRESIDENT DO THEIR WORK FOR THEM.

IN OUR CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT, AMBASSADOR LINOWITZ AND I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT A GOOD REVIEW OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING THE LAST ROUND OF TALKS. WE DID THE SAME WITH THE VICE PRESIDENT, WHO IS PARTICULARLY FAMILIAR WITH THE REQUISITES AND THE OPERATIONS OF THE CONGRESS, AS A RESULT OF HIS RECENT PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THERE. BOTH OF THEM GREATLY EMPHASIZED, AS WAS REFLECTED IN THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER,

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THAT WE COULD NOT CONSIDER A TREATY RELATIONSHIP THAT DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE UNITED STATES INTEREST AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PERMANENT NEUTRALITY AND SECURITY OF THE CANAL. THEY ESPECIALLY EMPHASIZED THAT THIS WAS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL RATIFICATION. I WANTED TO UNDERSCORE THIS BEFORE WE TAKE UP THE OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO THE LAST ROUND. LINOWITZ: I WOULD LIKE TO ADD MY OWN WORDS OF APPRECIATION TO YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO COME HERE TO WASHINGTON TO MEET WITH US. IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE TO MEET WITH YOU IN PANAMA AND NOW HERE. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I PERSONALLY WELCOME THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH YOU ARE APPROACHING THIS MEETING. OUR GOVERNMENT IS ALSO EAGER TO MOVE AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE TO SEE WHETHER WE CAN MAKE SOME REAL PROGRESS. YOU MUST AVOID

WHAT WE DID YESTERDAY, WHICH WAS TO FLY HIGH, WITHOUT A DESTINATION. IT IS THAT SAME SPIRIT THAT WE SHARE IN THE HOPE THAT WE CAN SPEAK WITH FRANKNESS AND IN A FORTHRIGHT MANNER, AND THAT WE AVOID PLAYING GAMES WITH EACH OTHER. TIME IS OF ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE TO BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS. I HAVE SAID SO BEFORE. IF WE WANT TO ARRIVE AT A NEW TREATY, THE TIME TO MOVE IS NOW. IF WE DON'T MAKE EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT TO ARRIVE AT A TREATY THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS AND OUR REQUIREMENTS, I AM AFRAID THAT WE WILL FIND OUT THAT THE MOMENT WILL HAVE PASSED US BY.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT I HAVE A SPECIAL PLEA TO MAKE: THAT WE TALK FRANKLY, THAT WE MAKE AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, AND THAT WE SEEK WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU AND FOR US, AND THAT WE DO SO WITH CONFIDENCE THAT WE CAN FIND THE ANSWERS. LET US SEEK THOSE GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR A TREATY THAT WE CAN PRESENT TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND TO THE HIGH OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, AND THAT WILL HAVE GOOD PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS AND APPROVAL AND RATIFICATION.

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BUNKER: MR. ESCOBAR, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE US TO PROCEED WITH THE ISSUES? WE COULD TAKE THEM UP FROM WHERE WE LEFT OFF ON OUR LAST MEETING. I MIGHT SUGGEST THAT WE START WITH WHAT WE CALL THE TRIAD, THAT IS THE GROUP OF ISSUES DEALING WITH DURATION, NEUTRALITY AND POST TREATY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS. WE COULD THEN GO ON TO THE POINTS YOU BROUGHT UP REGARDING LANDS AND WATERS. ALSO THE QUESTION OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES. THE QUESTION OF THE ENTITY. YOU POINTED OUT DURING THE PAST FEW MEETINGS THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN MATTERS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO YOU, SUCH AS PORTS, DOCKS, THE RAILROAD, HOUSING, COMMON LAND AREAS, AND THAT KIND OF THING. WOULD YOU WANT TO BEGIN WITH THE TRIAD?

LINOWITZ: AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, BECAUSE WE HAVE MENTIONED IT DURING THE COURSE OF EARLIER TALKS, AND AS WE HAVE NOW SEEN STRONGLY REINFORCED SINCE OUR RETURN TO WASHINGTON, IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO REACH SOME UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THE PRESERVATION OF THE CONTINUED NEUTRALITY OF THE CANAL. THIS WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL, AND ALSO CONGRESSIONAL RATIFICATION. IF YOU FEEL THAT SOME THOUGHT CAN BE GIVEN IN THESE TALKS TO THIS MATTER, AND IN THE LIGHT OF GENERAL TORRIJO'S LETTER, DO TELL US WHAT FLEXIBILITY YOU CAN SHOW, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO APPROACH THE KIND

OF A DEAL THAT WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT YOUR CONCERNS AND  
YOUR NEEDS REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY AND WILL ALLOW A POSITIVE  
RESPONSE TO THE US POSITION. IT IS THEN THAT WE WILL  
BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD, WITH FLEXIBILITY ON THE OTHER  
ISSUES. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT WE CAN TALK ABOUT  
THE VITAL PROBLEMS BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT THE OTHER ISSUES.  
PERHAPS YOU COULD INDICATE TO US WHICH WOULD BE A USEFUL  
WAY TO START.

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ESCOBAR: I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUGGESTION. I TOO  
BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY WAY TO PROCEED, IS TO TALK FRANKLY  
AND HONESTLY, AS WE HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. THE ONLY WAY  
TO MOVE FORWARD IS TO AVOID GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES. I  
THINK THAT THIS MEETING MUST HAVE AS ITS FUNDAMENTAL GOAL  
TO ARRIVE AT POLITICAL DECISIONS SO THAT OUR RESPECTIVE  
CHIEFS OF GOVERNMENT MAY ASSUME A REALISTIC ATTITUDE IN  
THE FRAMEWORK IN WHICH POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE MADE.

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EXDIS

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER ONLY

I BELIEVE THAT TO CONTINUE DISCUSSING EVERY ISSUE BY ISSUE  
THAT LIES BETWEEN US, WITHOUT GOING INTO THE CENTRAL  
PROBLEM OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS, IS A WASTE OF TIME. WE  
CONSIDER THAT WHAT WE SHOULD DO, IS TO POINT OUT WITH  
GREAT CLARITY WHETHER BOTH COUNTRIES ARE READY TO

ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR TAKING THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL DECISIONS NECESSARY FOR A NEW TREATY, AND WHETHER EACH GOVERNMENT CAN CONFRONT THEIR RESPECTIVE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS WITH THOSE DECISIONS.

I WILL TRY TO BE MORE CONCRETE. THE CONCERN OF THE US DELEGATION IS WHETHER PANAMA IS IN A POSITION TO MAKE THE NECESSARY POLITICAL DECISION REGARDING THE PROBLEM OF NEUTRALITY AFTER THE END OF THE TREATY, AND WHETHER PANAMA HAS THE CAPACITY TO MAKE THE POLITICAL DECISION TO CREATE THE INSTRUMENT THAT WILL ALLOW THE US GOVERNMENT THE POWER TO DEFEND THE CANAL AGAINST THIRD COUNTRY ATTACKS, AFTER THE TERMINATION OF THE TREATY.

FROM OUR STANDPOINT, AND AS VITAL TO US AS THE ABOVE IS TO THE US, IS TO ASK WHETHER THE UNITED STATES IS READY TO MAKE THE POLITICAL DECISION TO RETURN TO PANAMA ITS PORTS, ITS RAILROAD, ITS LANDS AND TO REDUCE ITS MILITARY  
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PRESENCE, WITHOUT REDUCING ITS CAPABILITIES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL. IS THE USG READY TO MAKE THE POLITICAL DECISION THAT WILL ALLOW PANAMA TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE CANAL ON THE YEAR 1990 WHILE THE US CONTINUES ITS MILITARY PRESENCE UNTIL THE YEAR 2000 WHEN THE TREATY TERMINATES? I BELIEVE THIS MEETING SHOULD FRANKLY CONSIDER IF THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE IN A POSITION TO ADOPT THE TYPE OF POLITICAL DECISION I HAVE STATED AND TRANSMIT THEM TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CHIEFS OF STATE. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DO SO, I THINK THAT YOU SHOULD FRANKLY STATE SO BECAUSE OTHERWISE WE ARE WASTING OUR TIME.

I BEG THE INDULGENCE OF THE DISTINGUISHED AMBASSADORS IF I MAY SOUND BLUNT, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE INTENT OF THIS MEETING IS TO CLEARLY DETERMINE WHETHER WE CAN TALK ABOUT THESE BASIC ISSUES. WE CANNOT MAKE THEM DEPENDENT UPON THE DISCUSSION OF SECONDARY MATTERS OR ON THE ISSUE BY ISSUE DISCUSSION OF OTHER PENDING MATTERS.

IN OTHER WORDS, PANAMA CAN MAKE THE POLITICAL DECISION ON THE ISSUE THAT IS VITAL TO THE UNITED STATES, THAT IS ON THE MATTERS OF NEUTRALITY AND POST TREATY DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS. CAN THE UNITED STATES MAKE THE DECISION ON THE RAPID DISMANTLING OF THE CANAL ZONE AND RETURN TO PANAMA OF ITS TERRITORY, WITHOUT AFFECTING THE DEFENSE OR THE OPERATIONS OF THE CANAL? I BELIEVE, DISTINGUISHED AMBASSADORS THAT THAT IS THE CHARACTER AND PURPOSE THIS MEETING SHOULD CONVEY.

LINOWITZ: I WOULD LIKE TO RESPOND BY SAYING THAT I WELCOME YOUR STATEMENT AND YOUR FRANKNESS AND THAT I WILL TALK WITH EQUAL FRANKNESS AND BLUNTNESS. AS YOU HAVE DONE, I WILL EQUALLY FOCUS ON THE ISSUES, AND WILL PLACE OUR IDEAS ON THE TABLE AND SPEAK WITH UTTER CANDOR. WE ARE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT YOU, ON SECRET

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BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA CAN MAKE THE DECISION AND THE NECESSARY UNDERTAKINGS ON THE ISSUES OF NEUTRALITY AND DEFENSE.

ON OUR PART, AS NEGOTIATORS, WE CAN ASSURE YOU THAT IF THAT IS THE KIND OF ATTITUDE THAT IS FORTHCOMING, WE CAN PROMISE YOU GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON THE ISSUES OF THE RAILROAD, THE LANDS, THE PORTS AND FACILITIES AND OTHER MATTERS. HOWEVER, OBVIOUSLY, WE WILL HAVE TO SUBMIT WHATEVER YOU PUT BEFORE US TO OUR HIGHER AUTHORITIES.

REGARDING THE DEFENSE ASPECTS NEITHER AMBASSADOR BUNKER NOT I, NOR INDEED OUR POLITICAL LEADERS, ARE IN A POSITION TO PROPOSE FORMULAS THAT DO NOT COUNT WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR DEFENSE LEADERS. ON THE ISSUES OF HOUSING FOR AMERICANS, PORT FACILITIES, ETC. WE MIGHT FIND SATISFACTORY PROPOSALS, BUT I COULD NOT PERSONALLY SUGGEST THAT WE RECOMMEND TO CONGRESS OR PRESENT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN ENDORSED BY OUR DEFENSE LEADERS. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WHATEVER YOU STATE ARE YOUR REQUIREMENTS, WE WILL TRANSMIT. HOWEVER, AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, AND I STILL FEEL VERY STRONGLY, THE IDEA OF THE YEAR 1990 SIMPLY WILL NOT WORK. I DO NOT SEE ANY POSSIBILITY FOR SUBMITTING AND OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR ANY DATE BEFORE THE YEAR 2,000. I WANT TO MAKE THIS CLEAR, UNEQUIVOCAL AND DEFINITE. I WOULD BE MISLEADING YOU IF I WERE TO SUGGEST THAT WE COULD DO MORE. FOR, IN OUR ROLE AS NEGOTIATORS, WE HAVE A SENSE OF WHAT IS POLITICALLY FEASIBLE, WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE US GOVERNMENT. IF IN THAT ASSURANCE YOU CAN SEE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROGRESS, LET US ATTEMPT TO MOVE AHEAD. WHAT MORE CAN I TELL YOU THAN WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TOLD AND WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER HIMSELF HAS STATED?

BUNKER: THAT IS A FAIR STATEMENT.

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## Message Attributes

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